



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

Facts About... Water Quality Issues

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort among state and federal agencies and the public to ensure a healthy ecosystem, reliable water supplies, good quality water, and stable levees in California's Bay-Delta and its tributaries.

The Problem

The California Bay-Delta system provides water for drinking, industry, recreation, agriculture, irrigation, and to support aquatic and wetland habitat. Water quality is critically important for each of these purposes. Unfortunately, there are problems with water quality in the Bay-Delta. Uncontrolled runoff from harvested forests, farms, mines, residential landscaping and urban streets, all contribute to the Bay-Delta water quality problem, as do discharges of municipal and industrial waste water. Also, high salt concentrations in waters from the Bay impact the use of Delta water for agriculture and drinking water, and can negatively affect the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

The Goal

To provide good quality water for drinking, agriculture, industrial, environmental and recreational uses.

Ways This Can Be Accomplished

The CALFED Bay-Delta Water Quality Program focuses on reducing the release of pollutants into the Bay-Delta system and its tributaries through implementation of source control measures. The Program will build upon current regulatory requirements by encouraging voluntary implementation of improved management practices that will help reduce discharges from urban storm water runoff, agricultural drainage, abandoned mines, and other sources that pollute Bay-Delta water.

Phase I of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program identified several potential implementation measures to improve water quality. Examples include:

- Coordinating implementation of efficient water quality management practices.
- Cleaning up and limiting runoff from high priority abandoned mines.
- Providing incentives for urban water agencies to upgrade their filtration systems.

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- Developing and coordinating programs to manage agricultural drainage. Also, shifting agricultural discharges from periods of low Delta inflow to periods of higher inflow to reduce ecosystem toxicity.

Things To Consider

Despite projected success in reducing pollution, CALFED Water Quality actions will be subject to some limitations. Depending upon the alternative chosen, the total mass of salts recycled to the San Joaquin River through the Valley's irrigation system may not be greatly reduced. Moreover, many of the proposed measures will be costly, including treatment systems for agricultural and mine drainage, and management of urban storm water runoff. Significant analysis must be done to determine the degree of water quality improvement that can be achieved through watershed management. Also to be studied, are questions such as whether wetland treatment systems would expose wildlife to unacceptable levels of toxins.

What You've Told Us

Through public meetings and comment, Californians have told the CALFED Bay-Delta Program several important things about the Water Quality Common Program, including:

- Municipal water users prefer access to high quality source water, rather than exclusive reliance on treatment.
- Dilution of pollutants is unsatisfactory as the dominant strategy for resolving water quality problems. Instead, water quality initiatives should focus on reducing pollution at the source.
- The alternatives should reduce salt and chemical re-circulation and decrease drainage discharges within the San Joaquin Valley.
- Delta water quality should not be degraded by any action or alternative.

Want To Know More?

For further information on how you can participate in the effort to restore the environment and water management of the California Bay-Delta system, contact: CALFED, 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814 ph: (916) 657-2666 Fax: (916) 654-9780 Public Information Line 1-800-700-5752, Website: <http://calfed.ca.gov>

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